



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Contact: John Asher  
Vice President, Racing Communications  
Churchill Downs Racetrack  
[John.Asher@KyDerby.com](mailto:John.Asher@KyDerby.com)  
(502) 636-4586 (office)  
(502) 494-3626 (mobile)

## **PERFECT THANKSGIVING WEEK WEATHER, SEEKING THE SOUL'S GI CLARK 'CAP, EXPLOITS OF RISING 'STARS OF TOMORROW' TOP CHURCHILL DOWNS' FALL MEET**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Monday, Nov. 27, 2017)** – After a damp and chilly start, **Churchill Downs Racetrack's** 21-day Fall Meet gave way to a sunny Thanksgiving Week highlighted by a breakthrough triumph by **Charles Fipke's** homebred **Seeking the Soul** in the \$500,000 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (Grade I), dazzling performances by rising 2-year-old Thoroughbreds in a pair of "Stars of Tomorrow" racing celebrations and a record number of sumptuous holiday dinners served to patrons in the track's traditional Thanksgiving Day racing program.

The excitement of the spectacular closing week placed an exclamation point on the successful racing and entertainment session that opened on Oct. 29 and concluded with a 12-race program on Sunday, Nov. 26. Despite weather concerns that had a particular impact on races scheduled for the Matt Winn Turf Course, fans who enjoyed Churchill Downs races live at the track, in satellite wagering centers throughout North America or via **TwinSpires.com** and other online wagering platforms wagered strongly on the large and competitive fields in the races offered during the meet.

Churchill Downs' recently-announced \$32 million project that will significantly improve its parking and transportation experience prompted adjustments for some Fall Meet track patrons as parking areas on the west side of the track were closed for construction activity during all or part of the 21-day session. That project is scheduled for completion prior to the 2018 Fall Meet and the return of the Breeders' Cup World Championship to Churchill Downs for the first time since 2011.

The meet's special events were topped by the annual Thanksgiving celebration at the track on Thursday, Nov. 23. Churchill Downs Executive Chef **Dave Danielson** and his team prepared turkey dinners with all the trimmings for more than 8,000 patrons – the largest number of dinners served since the traditional menu of turkey and racing at the track was launched in 1969.

"Although occasional damp and chilly weather and adjustments required by early construction work in our exciting parking and transportation project presented some hurdles for both our patrons and horsemen, our Fall Meet was a strong and satisfying racing and entertainment experience that has set the stage for a very exciting 2018," said **Kevin Flanery**, President of Churchill Downs Racetrack. "We appreciate the patience displayed by patrons and horsemen who were affected by our ongoing construction and thank them for their support and participation in a memorable 21 days of racing and special events.

"With large numbers of promising 2-year-olds on display, our Fall Meet is always focused on the future. But the visible progress of our construction efforts and the launch of the countdown to next year's return of the Breeders' Cup World Championships heightened the anticipation and excitement displayed during in our just-concluded meet, and we join our fans, horsemen, jockeys and residents throughout our region in looking forward to a most exciting 2018."

The meet's racing highlights were headed by the Clark Handicap victory by Seeking the Soul and jockey **John Velazquez**. The 4-year-old son of Perfect Soul earned the first graded stakes triumph of his 17-race career when he held off 3-year-old star **Good Samaritan** and 2014 Clark winner **Hoppertunity** in the traditional "Black Friday" racing headliner. With Seeking the Soul's victory, trainer **Dallas Stewart** has now won two of the three premier races that date to Churchill Downs' inaugural racing meet in 1875. Stewart's **Lemons Forever** took the 2006 Kentucky Oaks (GI) and he saddled two horses to runner-up finishes in the Kentucky Derby: **Golden Soul** (2013) and **Commanding Curve** (2014).

Dramatic and memorable renewals of Churchill Downs' pair of \$200,000, Grade II stakes races for 2-year-olds – the Kentucky Jockey Club and the Golden Rod – highlighted the second of the meet's popular **'Stars of Tomorrow'** programs devoted exclusively to racing among rising juvenile stars. **Godolphin's Enticed** held off **Frank L. Jones Jr.'s** Churchill Downs-based **Tiz Mischief** by a head in the 1 1/16-mile Kentucky Jockey Club, a "Road to the Kentucky Derby" points race. **John C. Oxley** and **Gary Barber's** unbeaten **Road to Victory** edged **Monomoy Stables** and **Michael Dubb's** previously undefeated **Monomoy Girl** by a neck after a race-long duel in the Golden Rod, which is a points event on the "Road to the Kentucky Oaks."

-more-

Other major stakes stars during the Fall Meet included **James M. Miller's Lovely Bernadette**, winner of the \$200,000 Mrs. Revere (GII) for 3-year-old fillies on turf; **Merriebelle Stable's Blue Prize (ARG)**, winner of the 102<sup>nd</sup> running of the \$200,000 Falls City Handicap (GII) on Thanksgiving Day; and **Coffeepot Stable's** 3-year-old filly **Farrell**, who rebounded from a disappointing run in the Kentucky Oaks in the spring to defeat older fillies and mares in the \$200,000 Chilukki (GII).

After a 2016 Fall Meet which had a fast main track every racing day and did not miss a scheduled turf race, weather and track conditions were more significant factors in the just-concluded meet. A total of 20 races were transferred from the Matt Winn Turf Course to the main track during 2017 meet. Those races were part of 10 racing programs, with all scheduled turf races taken off the turf on eight racing days and two other days when one or two scheduled grass races were transferred to the main track.

Despite a significant number of scratches in the just-concluded meet due mostly to damp turf conditions, 1,977 horses started in the meet's 221 races. The average field for a Fall Meet race was 8.9 horses – which was essentially flat with the 2016 Fall Meet average of 9.0 horses-per-race.

Total purses paid during the 21-day racing session rose to \$10,499,144 – an increase 4.3 percent from total purses of \$10,066,716 paid during the same number of days of Fall Meet racing in 2016. The average purse for a 2017 Fall Meet race was \$47,507 – a 4.3 percent increase from the previous Fall Meet's average of \$45,551. Average daily purses during the 2017 Fall Meet rose to \$499,959 – a 4.3 percent increase from the 2016 average of \$479,367.

It was a busy meet at the Churchill Downs claim box as 187 horses were claimed over its 21 days for a total of \$3,892,500. The claiming activity resulted in \$233,550 in sales tax revenue for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. For the year, a total of 472 horses were claimed during Churchill Downs' three racing meets for a total of \$9,438,500. Sales tax revenue for the year totaled \$566,310.

The early days of the Fall Meet saw a historic changing of the guard atop Churchill Downs' roster of all-time winning trainers when Louisville native **Dale Romans** surpassed Hall of Fame conditioner **Bill Mott** with a victory by **Team Valor International** and **Gemstone Stables'** 2-year-old **Storm Runner** in a maiden race on Sunday, Nov. 12. The victory marked the 703<sup>rd</sup> career trip to the winner's circle for Romans, and made the son of the late trainer **Jerry Romans** the all-time leader in training victories beneath the historic Twin Spires.

"With everything I've done in my career at Churchill Downs, and around the country, nothing beats this moment right now," Romans said minutes after he achieved the milestone. "I've grown up on the backside of Churchill Downs. It was my playground when I was a kid and I used to always watch Bill Mott win multiple races per day. Over the years we became friends. He's called me multiple times and wished me luck. That just shows how classy of a guy he is."

Mott, 65, held the record for wins by a trainer for 31 years. Romans registered a total of five wins during the meet.

Familiar faces took home championship honors in the Fall Meet's human races, led by another dazzling performance by jockey **Corey Lanerie**, who guided 38 horses into the winner's circle to easily earn the title of leading rider. The riding crown for the 43-year-old native of Lafayette, La. was his 15<sup>th</sup> in the last 17 meets at the Louisville track. With his win aboard **Live Oak Plantation's Souper Catch** in the meet's final race Lanerie pulled into a tie with Hall of Fame jockey and 1966 Kentucky Derby winner **Don Brumfield** for total victories at Churchill Downs. Lanerie, whose Fall Meet win total included three stakes victories, will begin the 2018 Spring Meet with 925 wins at the track, trailing only Hall of Famers **Pat Day** and **Calvin Borel** and third-place **Robby Albarado** on the all-time win list.

**Ricardo Santana Jr.** (19 victories) finished second in the race for leading jockey, and was followed by **Julien Leparoux** (16), **Brian Hernandez Jr.** (15), Albarado (12) and **Florent Geroux** and **Jon Court**, who tied with 10 wins.

During the meet in which Romans became Churchill Downs' all-time leading trainer, another Louisville native earned the honor of being its top trainer. **Brad Cox** edged Hall of Famer **Steve Asmussen** 13-12 to earn his first Fall Meet training crown. He had his first-ever leading trainer title at Churchill Downs in the track's September Meet. Cox saddled 55 horses that compiled a record of 13-10-4, which reflected a win rate of 24 percent and 49 percent of his runners finished in-the-money.

Other trainers who enjoyed strong success during the meet were **Eddie Kenneally** (8 wins), **Kenny McPeck** (7), **Mark Casse** (7) and **Mike Maker** (6).

**Ken and Sarah Ramsey** continued their unprecedented run of success when four horses that carried their familiar red and white silks entered the winner's circle to provide the Nicholasville, Ky. couple with their record-extending 30<sup>th</sup> title as leading owner at Churchill Downs. The Ramseys are by far the all-time leader in total victories at the track and edged a group of five owners with three victories that included **Scott Leeds' Walking L Thoroughbreds**, **John Ed Anthony's Shortleaf Stable**, **James L. Stone's Stoneway Farm**, **Randy Patterson**, **Stephen R. Baker** and **Jerry Crawford's Donegal Racing**.

Churchill Downs will conduct three racing meets in 2018, and its 38-day Spring Meet will be conducted from April 28-June 30. The 144<sup>th</sup> running of the \$2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) is scheduled for Saturday, May 5 and the \$1 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) is set for Friday, May 4. Its 11-day **September Meet** is scheduled for **Sept. 14-30** and its 21-day **Fall Meet** will run **Oct. 28-Nov. 25**.

The Breeders' Cup World Championships will return to Churchill Downs in 2018 for a record-equaling ninth time. The event was most recently held at Churchill Downs in back-to-back renewals in 2010-11.

Churchill Downs, the world's most legendary racetrack, has conducted Thoroughbred racing and presented America's greatest race, the Kentucky Derby, continuously since 1875. Located in Louisville, the flagship racetrack of Churchill Downs Incorporated (NASDAQ: CHDN) offers year-round simulcast wagering at the historic track. Churchill Downs will conduct the 144<sup>th</sup> running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve on May 5, 2018. The track's 2018 Spring Meet is scheduled for April 28-June 30. An eight-time host to the Breeders' Cup World Championships, Churchill Downs will again be the site of that event on Nov. 2-3, 2018. Information is available at [www.ChurchillDowns.com](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com).

-END-